

A Pride of Lions

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The lions are on the wall
There's mine
With a bone in between
the wide zoo cage bars
An orange water dish is pasted near
the golden paws of my cut-out lion
And fat white letters stand out
L . . . E . . . O
No one else named their lion.
I can pick mine out from far away.
As we single-file to lunch
I look over my shoulder to see the lions again
There's mine.
No, wait—that one has white letters too,
spelling LEO.
I fidgeted through lunch
Who copied?
Some of us got back to the classroom early
I glared at the wall
The other lion was shabby
the pencil lines didn't really make
eyes, nose, mouth.
No one was looking
I reached up high and tore down the crooked letters
I sat down at my desk
red hot but right.
The rest of the class came in
The dumb runny-nosed boy
pointed at the raggedy lion copy
I froze.
See, he said, it's like hers.
He turned
his big head smiling
I like your lion
It has a name and everything
His blue eyes shined at me
I think I said thank you.